



COMMISSION ON AGING

FY24 Budget Priorities

The Commission on Aging (CoA) is pleased to present in ranked order our priorities for Fiscal Year 2024.

1. Hire one full-time equivalent position within Aging and Disability Services to serve as a Coordinator for older adult Communications and Outreach to improve awareness of County programs for older adults.

Many residents are unaware of services available for older adults. Therefore, the CoA urges the Council to provide funding to DHHS to hire one full-time equivalent position within Aging and Disability Services to serve as Coordinator for Communications and Outreach. The position should: provide outreach to the County's many diverse communities; support a library liaison program to ensure all public libraries have an older adult section with materials of interest to older adults; coordinate an Ambassadors Program; promote SNAP and the senior nutrition program; help plan a Summit on Aging in 2023; and more.

2. Increase funding for In-Home Aide Services (IHAS) for both DHHS staff and contract budgets

The older adult population of Montgomery County is rising at an unprecedented rate. Older adults prefer to remain in their own homes and seek home and community-based services (HCBS) to avoid or postpone nursing home placement. The State of Maryland offers programs that assist low-income, disabled, and elderly individuals to live in the community, including Medicaid waivers and assistance from other State and Federal funding. Eligibility guidelines (financial and medical) are strict and waiting lists are long. As of 9/19/22, approximately 140 residents were on the Social Services to Adults (SSTA) waitlist waiting to receive an assessment for Home Care Services.

The CoA advocates for increased funding to expand the number of residents eligible for services and to decrease the time residents must wait to receive assessments and services. To help achieve these goals, the Commission recommends more personnel for IHAS including a Case Manager and an Intake Coordinator/Assessment Worker to improve the timeliness and quality of assessments that determine eligibility of older adults to receive HCBS. Further, the CoA hopes to increase FY24 funding for IHAS contractors to expand services to more people including some of the "gap population" (those above the income limits for Medicaid waivers but who cannot afford to pay for HCBS on their own).

The CoA has identified other items for which we will advocate during the budget cycle:

- Monitor progress of the Access HEARS pilot and provide funds if needed. (\$250,000 over 2 years, providing 300-400 devices and staff to fit/monitor use).
- Support villages' efforts to improve cost efficiency and equity and decrease the administrative burdens associated with running a village through development of a "hub and spoke" model.
- Plan and conduct a Telecare/Telehealth demonstration project to improve access to healthcare and support services for older adults (\$250,000).
- Increase funding for mental health outreach for older adults (Senior Outreach Team) to eliminate waiting lists.
- Provide funding and assign staff to plan a Summit on Aging in 2023 to help the County plan for a growing older adult population.
- Provide funds to conduct the nationally recognized "Passenger Assistance Safety and Sensitivity" certification training to Montgomery County drivers of taxicabs and wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- Provide gap-filling transportation services to older adults and residents with disabilities to prevent missed medical and other vital appointments (\$120,000).